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SUBJECT: UN TO RATIONALIZE ITS WOMEN'S AFFAIRS MECHANISMS

REF: A. PHIPPS-LUM E-MAIL JULY

11. (SBU) Summary. The high-level panel on UN System-Wide Coherence underlined, in its 2004 report, the need for reform in the gender sector, and the Member States have agreed that the UN's approach to gender/women needs to be rationalized and strengthened. Deputy Secretary-General Migiro presented a paper with four options (ref A) in July, which is now under discussion. USUN believes Option D, a "composite" entity, comes closest to a viable way forward, although more fleshing out, and possibly modification, of the details of this option are needed. Discussions will continue during the 63rd General Assembly, with an eye towards making a decision by September 12009. This cable describes the four options and requests the Department's guidance on the preferred outcome described in para 9. End summary.

12. (U) Currently, the UN has four separate offices to deal with aspects of women's or gender issues. There is poor coordination between them, no common line of authority, and no institutional links within the UN's organizational structure. The four UN entities are: the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (OSAGI), and the International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), located in Santo Domingo. UNIFEM is governed by the UNDP Executive Board, DAW and OSAGI report ultimately to the Secretary-General, and INSTRAW has its own Executive Board and donor base. No common authority oversees them.

13. (SBU) The four entities, along with others such as UNICEF and UNFPA, participate to varying degrees in several Task Forces and Working Groups that have been created to try to bring coherence to policies and programs emerging from this duplicative structure. Nevertheless, the system is marked by competition and lack of collaboration. None of the entities are an effective voice to hold other, larger, agencies and offices accountable for mainstreaming gender concerns and taking note of women's unique needs in their sectoral programs. Civil society as well as member states have actively criticized the inefficiency of the current "gender architecture."

14. (SBU) The four options presented by D/SYG Migiro are: A) Status Quo, B) autonomous fund or programme, C) new Department of the Secretariat, and D) "composite" entity with a new governing body. Except for Option A, all would be headed by an Under-Secretary-General. The co-chairs of the System-Wide Coherence process (the PermReps of Tanzania and Ireland) convened a meeting September 8 to discuss the options. Below we note some pros and cons of each option, which are spelled out in more detail in the D/SYG's July 23 paper (found on the website of the President of the UN General Assembly at <http://www.un.org/ga/president/62/letters/usgswc280708.pdf>)

## OPTION A - Status Quo

15. (SBU) Key Features: Retain the existing structures of OSAGI, DAW, UNIFEM and INSTRAW. Enhance funding, coordination, joint action and cost-sharing, per WFP, IFAD and FAO as a model. Voluntary funding for UNIFEM and INSTRAW; regular budget for OSAGI and DAW. Member state oversight through donor influence and UNGA 3rd and 5th committee resolutions.

--PROS: Least costly. No new high level position created. Least time-consuming to achieve. Smallest chance of creating a flawed but powerful structure.

--CONS: Unlikely to strengthen gender programming or women's place in society/economy. Continue to lack a strong voice for women at HQ or in the field. Not sure if WFP/IFAD/FAO coordination model has been successful.

--COMMENT: USMission in Rome, USAID or IO/T may have some information on coordination model mentioned above. NGO community will be unsatisfied with this result. There may be space, however, to strengthen and consolidate some of the existing mechanisms without moving quite so far as the other options do.

## OPTION 2 - Autonomous Fund/Programme

16. (SBU) Key Features: Create a new Fund/Programme on the level of UNDP, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, etc. Create a new Executive Board. Headed by a Head of Agency at U/SYG level. All voluntary funding. Basically, enhancing UNIFEM while abolishing OSAGI and DAW.

--PROS: Strong presence in the field. Capable of operational

activities. Can have impact on women's lives. No regular budget cost. Builds upon the part of the gender structure the USG likes most (UNIFEM).

--CONS: Costly; unclear if sufficient donor funding would exist to give new entity a worldwide presence in the field. No support for Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meetings. Influence on other Funds/Programs (UNDP, UNICEF, etc) is unclear; others might drop operational programming to help women in face of new entity's responsibility for women. Coordination with UNFPA and its women's programs is undefined.

--COMMENT: An existing part of the Secretariat (DESA) would need to be assigned to "service" CSW. Several developing countries have already expressed their interest in this option.

## OPTION 3 - New Department of Secretariat

17. (SBU) Key Features: Create a new Department, on the level of DPA, DPKO, OCHA. Headed by a U/SYG who reports to the SYG. Regular budget funding. Basically, enhances and combines DAW and OSAGI, while abolishing UNIFEM.

--PROS: none.

--CONS: Costliest option. Expands Secretariat, contrary to UN reform goals. Weak in the field; no capability to run operational programs.

--COMMENT: This is the least attractive of the options to the US and others. Not a single Member State expressed any interest in pursuing this option. This is partially a reflection of the unimpressive work done by OSAGI and DAW, as well as a desire that emphasis be on results in the field, rather than on enlarging the Secretariat at headquarters.

## OPTION 4 - Composite Entity

18. (SBU) Key Features: Create a new Intergovernmental governing body, reporting either to GA or ECOSOC. Headed by a U/SYG. Combine operational and policy/normative responsibilities in one entity. Funding partially from regular budget, partially from voluntary

contributions. Some presence in the field. Similar to Status Quo, but with new layer of oversight and formal coordination.

--PROS: Avoids sole reliance on regular budget. Field-based focus. Policy function does not disappear. Strong voice for women within the system. Common authority would preside over both field operations and policy. Head of entity would be part of Chief Executives Board (CEB) on an equal par with heads of UNDP, UNICEF, etc.

--CONS: Creation of new Intergovernmental governing body could be difficult, controversial and result in diminished USG influence. Functioning of new Intergovernmental body will be costly. Field presence could be weak, if voluntary contributions are insufficient.

--COMMENT: There is no precedent for such a structure and details are still unclear. In establishing a new governing body, we would need to take steps to avoid reliving the process of creating the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the Peacebuilding Council (PBC). There are some indications that the new governing body might simply build upon the existing Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which could be an acceptable approach. The "composite" option coincides with USG position of wanting to avoid putting the budget of the new entity on the regular budget. Several countries, including Europeans and some developing countries, have indicated they are leaning towards support for Option D.

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COMMENT  
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19. (SBU) None of the options are optimal. A middle way might be thought of as a "Status Quo Plus" that would retain the parts of the existing structure that work, merge redundant parts of the structure, and retain the goal of having all parts of the UN system make gender one of their concerns in their work (i.e., "mainstream" gender). This could possibly be done by 1) merging OSAGI and DAW and assigning a strong, energetic, authoritative head for the new gender/women's office within the Secretariat (thus eliminating duplication), 2) retaining UNIFEM, which does excellent, but limited, work in the field, while seeking to enlarge its voluntary funding and field operations; 3) avoiding creation of a new intergovernmental or governing body. INSTRAW could either be retained, or turned into a branch of UNIFEM, to continue to function

as a think tank and research unit (thus avoiding resistance from the Latin Americans, who strongly support this small office based in the Dominican Republic). If the USG adamantly opposed the creation of a new U/SYG post, we could explore whether giving ultimate authority for gender to the Deputy Secretary-General would provide sufficient accountability and authority within the UN system and whether the D/SYG would have time to firmly lead the existing coordination structures.

Khalilzad